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Education-to-work transitions of aspiring creatives

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Despite some segments of the creative industries in Australia performing better than other segments in terms of earnings and employment growth, they all rely on highly skilled workers and face similar workforce challenges. Workers typically experience multiple entry attempts, spells of unemployment, short-term contracts, high degrees of mobility, casual/part-time employment within and outside the creative industries, and pressure to ensure their skills remain relevant. Skills shortages and gaps, an insufficient supply of high quality industry-ready graduates, difficulties in predicting demand for skills, weak linkages between industry and education providers, reliance on overseas talent in some segments, limited opportunities for workers to engage in skill development, and pressure on workers to keep abreast of technological developments are ongoing issues in the creative industries workforce. In response to these concerns, the Australian Research Council, three State Governments, industry, and a large vocational education and training (VET) provider funded Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to conduct the 60Sox project. This three-year project investigated the education, training, and work experiences of aspiring creatives defined as new entrants, recent graduates, and students enrolled in creative industries courses. It involved the largest survey of aspiring creatives ever undertaken in Australia, attracting 507 respondents, and a survey of 50 employers. Using the framework proposed by Hannan, Raffe, and Smyth (1996), this article presents findings from an analysis of the macro and micro labour market outcomes of aspiring creatives using data from the two 60Sox project surveys and publicly available sources. The analysis confirmed that many graduates of creative industries courses who participated in the 60Sox survey and the national surveys for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and Graduate Careers Australia were struggling to make a successful transition from education to work. This article also discusses the causes of this key finding and possible solutions to address transition issues.

Keywords: creative industries, education-to-work transitions, graduates, aspiring creatives, pathways, skills, Australia

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Introduction

In 2007/2008, the creative industries contributed $31.1 billion in industry gross product to the Australian economy, which is equivalent to 2.8% of GDP, and employed 316,600 workers. The creative industries achieved an average annual growth rate of 5.8% over the 11 years to 2007/2008, well above the annual growth rate for the broader economy of 3.6% over the same period. The Software Development and Interactive Content segment is responsible for much of this growth, accounting for 43.8% of earnings and 38.3% of jobs in 2007/2008 (Centre for International Economics, 2009). Other segments like Music and Performing Arts and Advertising and Marketing have experienced only slight increases in earnings and employment. The above data, however, does not represent the full economic value of the creative industries. It does not capture all of the productive activity of those people intensely engaged in the creation and symbolic value of their work (Cunningham, 2009); undertaking voluntary unpaid creative work; or creating ideas that lead to the new products, services, industry sectors, or innovations in other sectors (Hearn & Bridgstock, 2010). In their *innovation model* of the creative industries, Potts and Cunningham (2008) questioned whether the creative industries are in fact an *industry* but rather an element of the national innovation system that generates new ideas and technologies, facilitates conditions of changes, and drives and coordinates the growth of knowledge (pp. 11-12). In recognition of the important role of the creative industries in the Australian economy, the Commonwealth Government committed $17 million in 2009 to establish the Creative Industries Innovation Centre to increase the productivity, competitiveness, and profitability of creative businesses and entrepreneurs (UTS, 2009).

The creative industries workforce in Australia, however, is often criticised for its instability caused by skills shortages and gaps, an insufficient supply of high quality industry-ready graduates, difficulties in predicting demand for skills, weak linkages between industry and education providers, reliance on overseas talent in some segments, limited opportunities for new workers or experienced workers to engage in skill development, and pressure on workers to keep abreast of technological developments in order to remain employable (DCITA 2005; AIMIA, 2005; Buchan Consulting, 2005). In the case of the Australian games industry, industry polls conducted in 2010 found that 83% of respondents indicated there are skills shortages in the industry despite the Global Financial Crisis that led to job losses and business closures, and 84% of respondents indicated games education and training courses were 'highly ineffective' (Haukka, 2011).

The creative industries in the United Kingdom have experienced similar issues. These issues include an oversupply of new entrants, an agile freelance pool who must ensure their skill currency, a mismatch of applicants' skills to the needs of the job, new entrants finding it difficult to secure their first job, employers preferring to recruit experienced employees and freelancers from home and abroad, and new entrants lacking skills and knowledge in multi-platform content, intellectual property legislation, management and leadership, and commercial acumen (SkillSet, 2009a; Galloway, Lindley, Davies & Scheibl, 2002). The digital content industries in particular are finding it difficult to recruit workers with the appropriate skills, qualifications and experience (SkillSet, 2009b).

In response to concerns about the creative industries workforce, the Australia Research Council, three State Governments, industry, and a large vocational education and training (VET) provider funded the Queensland University of

Technology (QUT) 60Sox project to investigate the education, training, and work experiences of aspiring creatives. Aspiring creatives are new entrants with less than two years industry experience, recent graduates, and students currently enrolled in creative industries courses. The project led to two major reports. The first report presented findings from the largest survey of aspiring creatives ever undertaken in Australia, which attracted 507 respondents (Haukka, Brow, Hearn, & Cunningham, 2009). The second report presented findings from the survey of 50 employers from Australia's creative industries (Haukka, Hearn, Brow, & Cunningham, 2010). This article draws on findings from these reports and data from relevant publicly available sources to examine the education-to-work transitions of aspiring creatives.

Transitions from education to work within the creative industries are of particular interest because of the distinctive nature of working in the sector. Aspiring creatives are increasingly working in environments characterised by collaboration and networks of alliances such as start-ups, company mergers, and clusters of small entrepreneurial organisations (SkillSet, 2001). They are increasingly responsible for delivering work in decentralised environments that rely on relationships to share information and resources to generate and commodify new knowledge (Potts & Cunningham, 2008).

Pathways into the creative industries are not institutionally or occupationally determined compared to pathways into other industries. Aspiring creatives tend to navigate their own non-linear pathways, which may involve an extended transition period, multiple entry attempts, further specialist training, spells of unemployment, self-employment, short-term contracts, and part-time and casual employment within and outside the creative industries (Bridgstock, 2005, 2009). Many rely on fill-in and multiple job-holding strategies involving non-professional work (Galloway et al.,

2002) as they "are forced to take second jobs to supplement their income stream or as a form of 'bridging' finance to support them while they break into or establish themselves in their chosen niche" (Guile, 2006, pp. 436–437). Galloway et al. (2002) also found that artists adopt coping strategies to deal with the challenge of gaining entry into their chosen occupation. These strategies include diversifying their expertise by working in jobs that support their professional profile like teaching, and relying on financial support from family and friends so they can undertake short-term contracts or voluntary unpaid work to gain relevant experience. Despite these challenges, aspiring creatives benefit from job mobility by gaining experience in different work environments and identifying jobs that match their skills and interests (Yates, 2005).

The rest of this article consists of five sections. The first section provides an overview of education-to-work transitions; the second section on approach describes the two 60Sox project surveys and publicly available data; and the third section presents findings from the analysis of labour market outcomes data from the two surveys and publicly available sources. The fourth section discusses the reasons why aspiring creatives are experiencing unsuccessful transitions as well as possible solutions to address transition issues. The fifth and final section summarises key findings presented in this article.

Education-to-work transitions

Jung, Misko, Lee, Dawe, Hong, and Lee (2004) defined an education-to-work transition as a student's preparation for transition, subsequent transition to the world of work, and the act of receiving the necessary education and training once they have entered the workplace (p. 13). This definition is reflected in the three interlinking stages of preparation, actual transition, and outcomes in the labour market proposed

by Hannan, Raffe, and Smyth (1996). These definitions indicate that not all outcomes can be measured at a single point in time; instead they should be monitored over an extended period (OECD, 2000). Gaining a broad picture of the labour market entrants involves studying the process of transitions and outcomes of education using economic and non-economic indicators (Opheim, 2007, p. 256). Stokes and Wyn (2007) found that the transition process is also a process of identity development that Ecclestone (2009) described as a slow, subtle process of "becoming somebody personally, educationally and occupationally' (p. 13). As Brooks (2009) and Stokes and Wyn (2007) pointed out, the transition from education to work is not a linear progression as young people often experience 'reversible transitions' where they move in and out of education and paid work, engage in work and full-time study at the same time, and participate in learning in different ways and in different places. Young people will not experience the same transition process and outcomes because transitions vary due to gender, social background, ethnicity, region, and social and economic conditions as well as different national contexts that influence:

- the nature of the education/training system and its interconnection with the labour market
- the structure and outcomes of the transition process
- how labour markets are organised
- the ways in which educational and occupational qualifications mediate young people's entry to the labour market
- state policies supporting transition processes, including the extent to which countries expect individuals to take responsibility for their own lifelong learning as well as the ways in which labour market assistance and welfare systems are organised
- the organisation and functioning of social partners and various levels of government.

(Hannan et al., 1996; OECD, 2000; Brooks, 2009; Opheim, 2007)

Four features of the creative industries make any analysis of education-to-work transitions of aspiring creatives somewhat complex. Firstly, the creative

industries in Australia consist of six segments[2] that vary in terms of earnings, employment, firm size, growth rates, labour supply and demand, occupations, skills requirements, wages and working conditions, and education and training opportunities. Therefore, an aspiring creative in one particular segment and/or occupation will have a different transition experience than an aspiring creative in another segment and/or occupation.

Secondly, the creative industries are less qualification-driven, with many employers recruiting workers because of their creative talent and/or job skills (Guile, 2006; Haukka et al., 2010; SkillSet, 2009a). Therefore, an analysis of education-to-work transitions in the creative industries must include indicators, such as 'meeting the skills needs of employers', which do not assume aspiring creatives have post-school qualifications or need these qualifications to secure work.

Thirdly, many aspiring creatives successfully prepare for their transition by starting their higher education studies immediately after completing their preparatory education and completing their studies within the stipulated duration of the program (Lindberg, 2008). However, the fluidity of transitions and non-linear career pathways make it difficult for many aspiring creatives to find work in their preferred creative occupation after they have completed their studies, and to access learning and development opportunities once they have entered the workforce. They are more likely than those seeking to work in other industries with defined career paths to experience what Brooks (2009) referred to as "'blend' periods of education and work, moving backwards and forwards between the two and engaging in significant elements of paid work whilst being a full or part-time student" (p. 2). Consequently, it

[2] The six segments in the Creative Industries: Music and Performing Arts; Film, TV and Radio; Writing, Publishing and Print Media; Advertising and Marketing; Software Development and Interactive Content; and Architecture, Design and Visual Arts (Centre for International Economics, 2009).

is likely that many aspiring creatives experience an *involuntary deviation from the standard or traditional transition*, defined by Lindberg (2008) as a "prolongation of job search and lowered expectations about the quality of jobs; returning to studies from labour markets as an alternative to being unemployed" (p. 377).

Finally, aspiring creatives work or intend to work in environments that require a high degree of flexibility, mobility and collaboration. In these environments, workers tend to operate on short-term contracts with study-based work and/or are self-employed; workers do not have regular access to learning and development opportunities, particularly those working in micro-businesses; and workers are expected to be self-directed learners as their learning is often measured by what they produce (MKW, 2001; Spillsbury, 2002; Guile, 2006). Therefore, some indicators of education-to-work transitions, such as career mobility and access to training, are more relevant than other indicators like security of employment.

The analysis also includes indicators known to enhance the transitions of aspiring creatives such as participation in communities of practices, networks, and capstone activities like internships and industry mentoring (Matthews, Green, Hall, & Hall, 2009; Smith & Rojewski, 1993; Hearn & Bridgstock, 2010; Haukka et al. 2009). Participation in these activities provide aspiring creatives with "working world experiences" that increase their understanding of what employers want and help to build their capabilities for lifelong learning (Holdsworth, Watty & Davies, 2009).

Approach

This article draws on the framework proposed by Hannan et al. (1996) to explore to what extent aspiring creatives in Australia are making successful transitions from education to work (see Table 1). This framework consists of the following macro and micro labour force outcomes:

- Macro outcomes - improving income levels, meeting skills needs of employers, and the role of education and training systems in promoting economic growth
- Micro outcomes - labour force participation, employment versus unemployment, matching between education/training characteristics and occupational status, occupational status, wages and wage growth, security of employment, job and career mobility, access to on-the-job or employer-sponsored training, and job satisfaction.

Table 1. Transitions indicators and data sources

Indicators	Data sources used in this article
Macro outcomes	
Meeting skills needs of employers	Aspiring creatives survey report (Haukka et al., 2009) Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010)
Micro outcomes	
Labour force participation	Aspiring creatives survey report (Haukka et al., 2009) Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010) GradStats: Employment and Salary Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates, (Graduate Careers Australia, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) VET Outcomes, Salaries and Jobs 2009 (NCVER, 2009a) Student Outcomes 2009 (NCVER, 2009b)
Matching between education/training characteristics and occupational status	VET Outcomes, Salaries and Jobs 2009 (NCVER, 2009a) Student Outcomes 2009 (NCVER, 2009b)
Wages and wage growth	GradStats: Employment and Salary Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates (Graduate Careers Australia, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 VET Outcomes, Salaries and Jobs 2009 (NCVER, 2007, 2009a) Student Outcomes 2009 (NCVER, 2009b)
Security of employment	Aspiring creatives survey report (Haukka et al., 2009) Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010)
Job and career mobility	Aspiring creatives survey report (Haukka et al., 2009) Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010)
Access to on-the-job or employer-sponsored training	Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010)
Transition enhancers	
Participation in communities of practice/networks and industry mentoring	Aspiring creatives survey report (Haukka et al., 2009) Employer survey report (Haukka et al., 2010)

Source: Adapted from Hannan et al., (1996); Haukka et al. (2009, 2010)

This article is based on transitions data from the aspiring creatives survey, employer survey, and limited publicly available sources. As many employers in the creative industries recruit aspiring creatives based on their creative talent and/or job skills and via word of mouth and networks (SkillSet, 2009a; Haukka et al., 2010), the approach also includes two indicators that enhance transitions i.e. participation in communities of practice/networks and participation in industry mentoring.

The major limitation of this approach is that the surveys and publicly available sources do not cover all activities in each creative industries segment or all creative occupations in each segment. For example, there are five industry classes in ANZSIC[3] and 21 occupations in ASCO[4] for the Film, Television and Radio segment (Centre for International Economics, 2009). Also existing industry and occupation classifications do not capture all new creative activities and occupations. Another limitation of the approach is that it only considers one part of the transition process (i.e. outcomes in the labour market) rather than the entire transition process that Smith and Rojewski (1993) pointed out is an "extended process with several milestones rather than a single event" (p. 224).

As indicated in Table 1, the analysis of education-to-work transitions in the creative industries presented in this article used findings from two reports based on the aspiring creatives survey and employer survey as well as data from publicly available sources for some segments and occupations. The surveys and publicly available data are explained below.

[3] Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)
[4] Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)

Aspiring creatives survey

Informed by several focus groups and one-on-one interviews with aspiring creatives around Australia, questions in the survey profiled aspiring creatives in terms of their characteristics, skill levels and attributes, barriers to employment, workforce mobility, career intentions, participation in professional development, access to mentors and industry supports, and participation in communities of practice. Respondents had the choice of completing a paper-based survey or an online survey. Sampling aspiring creatives was a difficult challenge because no unified database of target respondents existed as a sampling frame and because this cohort are often itinerant; involved in other pursuits or uninterested in responding. To attract survey respondents, Haukka et al. (2009) used a triangulated sampling approach that consisted of:

- *Convenience sampling* - Researchers distributed the survey to education and training providers with relevant course offerings across Australia. Many respondents were students enrolled in higher education and vocational training courses offered by providers within the project partner network.
- *Opportunistic sampling* - Some respondents became aware of the survey when they became a member of 60Sox and/or contributed to the project's website at 60Sox.org.au. Those aspiring creatives who participated in the survey were able to enter the draw for a $1,000 prize.
- *Snowballing sampling* - Respondents referred other respondents to the 60Sox project website and survey.

The sampling methods used meant that the respondents were not a representative sample of aspiring creatives or an even mix of students (266 respondents), graduates (166 respondents), and people currently being paid to use their creative talent (64 respondents). There was an overrepresentation of respondents from Victoria due largely to researchers approaching a greater number of students from educational institutions in this State. These students accounted for 22.9% of all respondents. In addition, a concern with any self-assessment exercise is that respondents' assessment of their performance is subjective and not based on a common understanding of expected performance in the creative industries. Many

respondents to the aspiring creatives survey perceived themselves as having very good employability skills and job-specific skills contrary to the reported views of employers that graduates are not industry ready.

Nevertheless, the sampling approach attracted a strong response, exceeding the original target of a national sample of 300 respondents to secure 507 respondents. A typical survey respondent was aged 21 years (median age from a range of 15–55 years), female (63.9% of all respondents), born in Australia (85.2%), living in Victoria or New South Wales (75.1%), employed casually (38.5%) but not in a paid creative position, and a full-time student in the final year of a Bachelor degree (52.5%).

Haukka et al. (2009) analysed aspiring creative survey data generated from frequency and cross-tabulation calculations. In order to identify any factors that may influence the ability of aspiring creatives to move from education to work, researchers used the binary logistic regression (Forward Wald) procedure to determine any associations between:

- the participation of aspiring creatives in paid work using their creative talent *and* variables of interest such as gender, age, personal engagement with industry, type of employment (e.g. employed full-time), involvement in communities of practice, etc.
- aspiring creatives who indicated finding work in preferred occupations was ‘difficult’ or ‘very hard’ *and* variables of interest similar to those above.

Employer survey

The online survey of employers consisted of questions in four areas:

- Characteristics of employers - industry segment, organisation type, location, workers, and years operating
- Recruitment and training practices - recruitment patterns, intentions and methods, and training provision
- Skills and attributes of aspiring creatives - importance of selected skills and attributes to employers, and capabilities of aspiring creatives in relation to these skills and attributes
- Other - participation in physical and online communities of interest/networks, mentoring, and internships.

To compare the views of employers and the views of aspiring creatives in relation to the capabilities of aspiring creatives, Haukka et al. (2010) aligned questions related to skills and attributes in the employer survey to questions in the aspiring creatives survey. Similar to the aspiring creatives survey, the employer survey included questions about the capabilities of aspiring creatives for eight (8) key skills and four (4) of the 13 personal attributes from the *Employability Skills Framework* (Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2002):

- Key skills - communication skills, team skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organising skills, self-management skills, learning skills, and technology skills
- Personal attributes - positive self-esteem, motivation, adaptability, and personal presentation.

The employer survey also included questions asking them to assess job-specific skills, business skills, career goals/planning skills, and software skills of aspiring creatives.

Using a convenience sampling approach, Haukka et al. (2010) used existing networks (particularly the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association) to attract 50 employers. A typical survey respondent was from the Software Development and Interactive Content industry segment, an established small business, employed graphic designers and programmers, employed a low proportion of aspiring creatives (over 80% of employers surveyed indicated aspiring creatives only accounted for between 0% and 20% of all workers), and located in New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland. The sampling approach used meant that respondents were not a representative sample of employers in Australia's creative industries. Over 90% of respondents were located in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland; and 54% belonged to the Software Development and Interactive Content segment. Other

limitations were the small sample size and the survey design that did not allow employers to provide detailed responses. For example, employers were not able to explain why aspiring creatives only accounted for a small proportion of all workers or what prevented some of them from offering internships and mentoring aspiring creatives.

Haukka et al. (2009) analysed employer survey data generated from frequencies, descriptives and cross-tabulations. The small sample size restricted the use of more rigorous procedures that indicate significance levels. They were able to use descriptive analysis to identify factors that may contribute to employers' views that aspiring creatives have *higher* capabilities in particular skills areas and *lower* capabilities in particular skills areas.

Publicly available sources

Publicly available sources in Australia only cover a small number of creative occupations. *GradStats: Employment and Salary Outcomes of Recent Higher Education Graduates* from Graduate Careers Australia provides data on the work, study, salaries, and course satisfaction of Visual/Performing Arts graduates four months after completing their undergraduate studies. *Student Outcomes 2009* from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) provides data on employment outcomes and satisfaction with vocational education and training (VET) for Arts and Media Professionals who completed their VET studies in 2008. *VET Outcomes, Salaries and Jobs 2009* from the NCVER provides data on employment outcomes, salaries and training satisfaction for Creative Arts graduates six months after completing their VET studies. Creative Arts graduates have completed VET courses like the Diploma in Graphic Design, Diploma in Visual Arts, Diploma in Arts

(Applied Photography, Studio Textiles and Design, Professional Writing and Editing, Small Companies, and Community Theatre), and Advanced Diploma of Music.

Findings

This section of the article presents findings by indicator group presented in Table 1 i.e. macro outcomes, micro outcomes, and transition enhancers. These indicators are also a resource for researchers who are interested in knowing what types of transitions data is available in Australia.

Macro outcomes

Hannan et al. (1996) argued that the concern with transitions at the macro level has been with the "relationship between educational 'outputs' and aggregate economic performance, in particular with the role of education/training systems in promoting economic growth, improving income levels, and meeting skill needs" (p. 6). The analysis of the macro labour force outcomes in this article is limited to data from the employer survey and aspiring creatives survey for the indicator of 'meeting skills needs of employers". The author could not locate any literature or data about the role of education and training systems in promoting economic growth in Australia's creative industries. Wages for graduates from publicly available sources is the only income data used in this article as the author did not locate other income data such as investment returns. Both surveys did not include any income questions. As a result, the analysis of 'improving income levels' was restricted to 'wages and wage growth' presented in the micro outcomes indicator group.

Meeting skills needs of employers

Employers indicated the capabilities of aspiring creatives for all 15 skills and attributes included in the employer survey were below their expectations when compared to the level of importance they placed on these skills and attributes to their

workplaces (Figure 1). The largest skills gaps of aspiring creatives were in the areas of problem-solving skills, communication skills, initiative and enterprise skills, self-management skills, team work skills, learning skills, and job-specific skills.

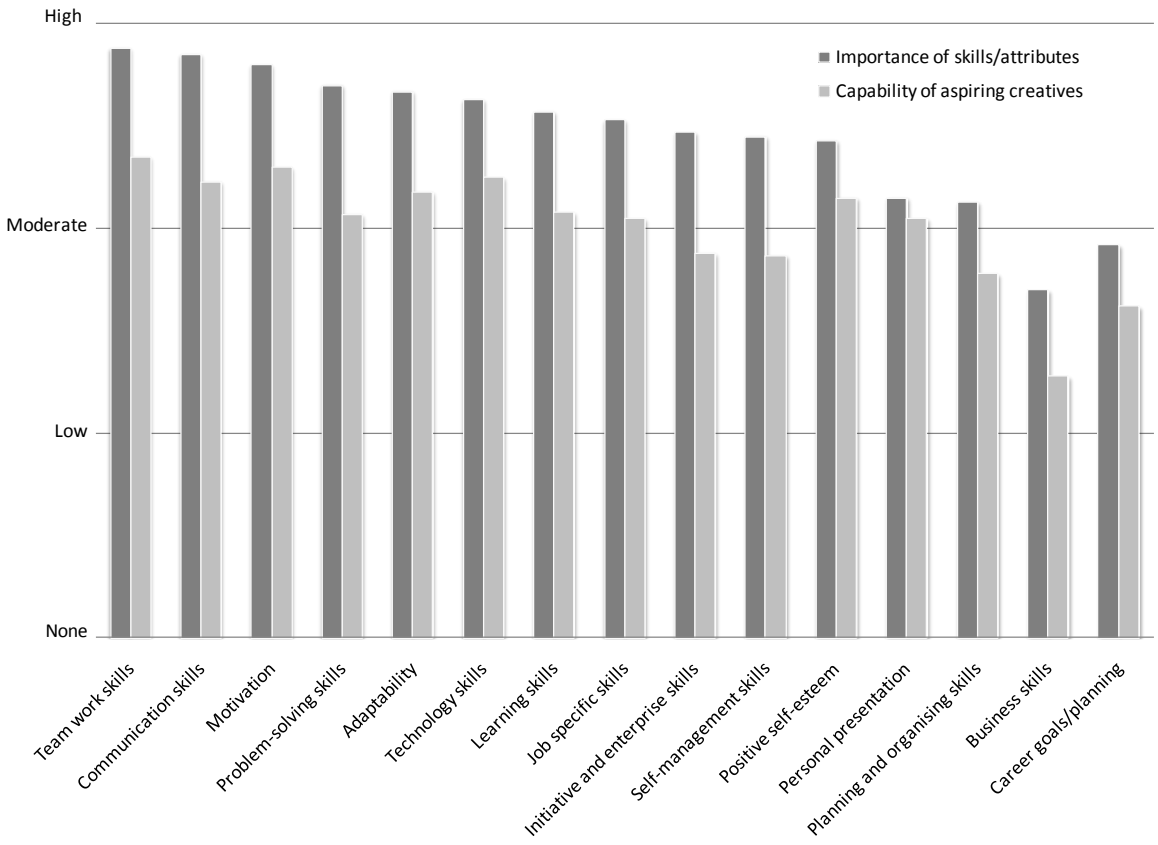

Figure 1. Employers' views of the *importance* of skills and attributes (mean rating) vs employers' views of the *capabilities* of aspiring creatives (mean rating)

Source: Haukka et al. (2010)

Aspiring creatives rated their capabilities for 13 of the 16 skills and attributes higher than employers rated the capabilities of aspiring creatives for these skills and attributes. Aspiring creatives rated their capabilities in the areas of motivation, positive self-esteem, and business skills lower than employers rated their capabilities for these particular attributes and skills (Figure 2). The main differences in views about the capabilities of aspiring creatives (i.e. where aspiring creatives rated their capabilities significantly higher than employers rated the capabilities of aspiring

creatives) were in the areas of career goals/planning, initiative and enterprise skills, and learning skills.

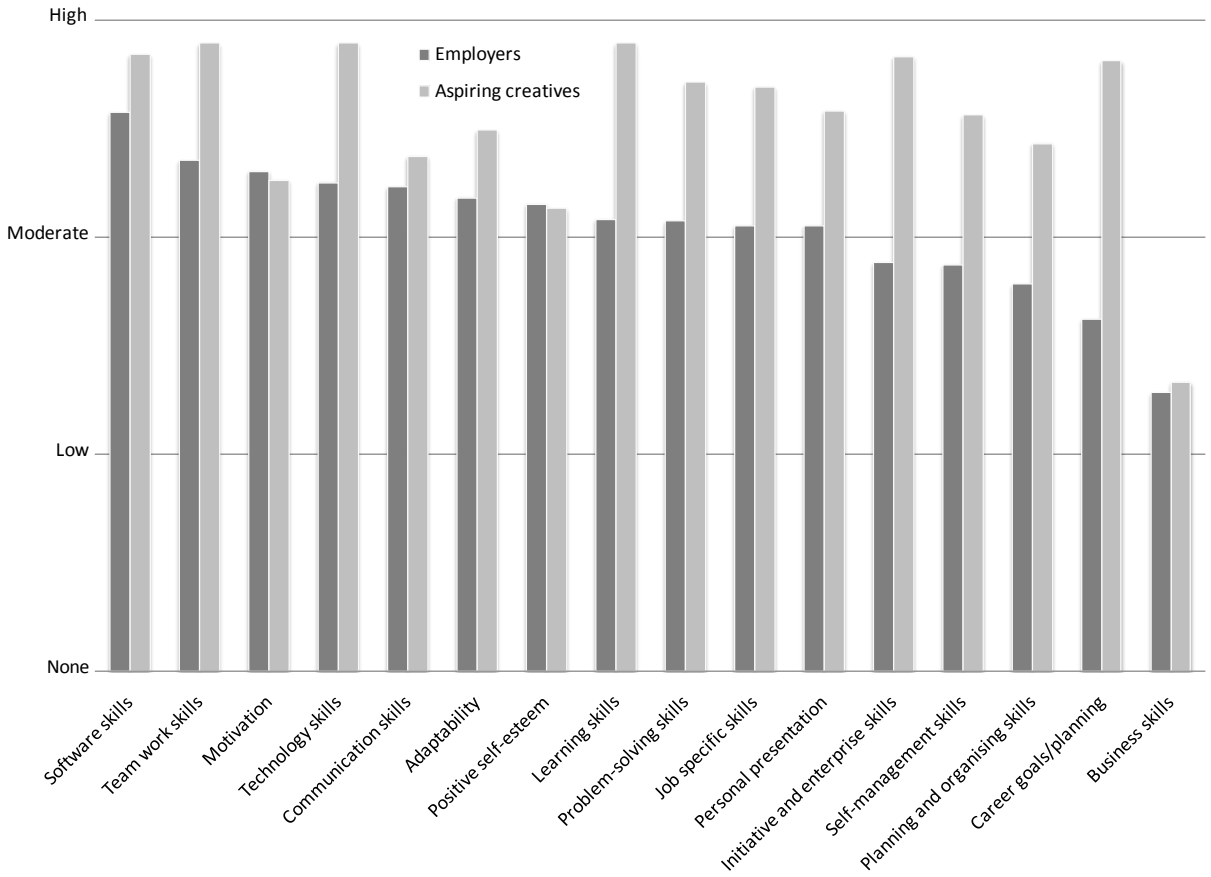

Figure 2. Employers' views of the capabilities of aspiring creatives (mean rating) vs aspiring creatives' views of their own capabilities (mean rating)

Source: Haukka et al. (2009); Haukka et al. (2010)

Micro outcomes

The indicators used in the analysis of the micro labour force outcomes of aspiring creatives were labour force participation, matching between education/training characteristics and occupational status, wages and wage growth, security of employment, job and career mobility, and access to on-the-job or employer-sponsored training.

Labour force participation

Just under one third (32.5%) of the 507 respondents who completed the aspiring creatives survey indicated they were *previously* in paid work using their creative

talent, and 12.6% indicated they were *currently* in paid work using their creative talent (see Figure 3). Of the 166 respondents who had graduated from their studies, 45.2% indicated they were *previously* in paid work using their creative talent and 18.7% indicated they were *currently* in paid work using their creative talent. University graduates were more likely to *previously* work in occupations using their creative talent (54.2%) than VET graduates (46.9%). There was no major difference between the outcomes of university graduates and the outcomes of VET graduates in the case of *current* employment using their creative talent.

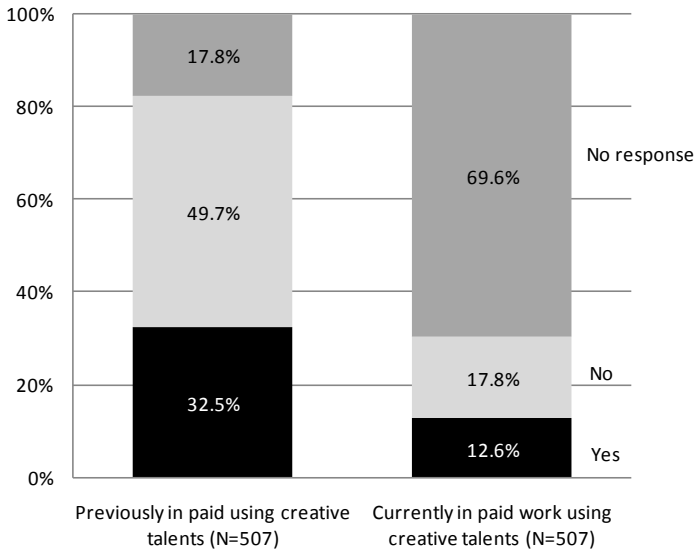

Figure 3. Previous and current employment of aspiring creatives using their creative talent

Source: Haukka et al. (2009)

Respondents *currently* employed to use their creative talent were most likely to indicate working as freelancers/self-employed (36.7%) or working full-time (30%). Examples of positions currently held by graduates using their creative talent included web developer/designer, video editor, video director/producer, technical support representative, support services, sound engineer, software developer assistant, programmer, production coordinator, photographer, musician, music producer, projectionist, and mural artist/sign writer.

As shown in Figure 4, one half (51.6%) of Visual/Performing Arts graduates with a Bachelor degree and under the age of 25 were employed in their first full-time job in 2009 compared to 79.2% of graduates for all fields combined (Graduate Careers Australia, 2009). As a result, the proportion of Visual/Performing Arts graduates seeking full-time employment in 2009 (48.4%) was well above the proportion of graduates seeking full-time employment for all fields combined (20.8%). Employment outcomes for Visual/Performing Arts graduates in 2009 were the worst recorded in the last four years.

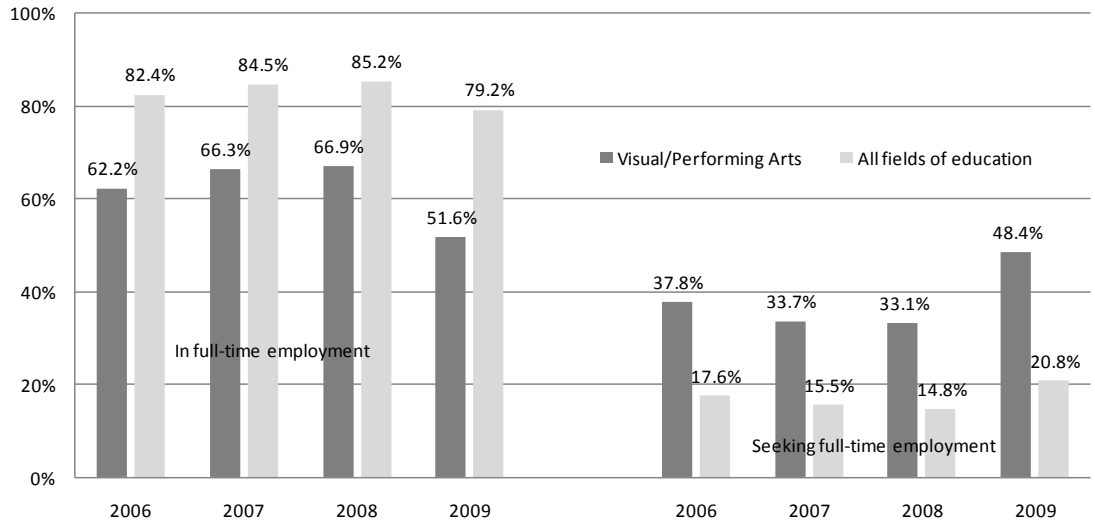

Figure 4. Visual/Performing Arts graduates and all graduates 'in' and 'seeking' full-time employment, 2006–2009

Source: Graduate Careers Australia (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009)

Regardless of qualification level, employment outcomes for Creative Arts VET graduates were lower than outcomes for VET graduates for all fields combined (see Table 2). Just over 60% of Creative Arts VET graduates were in employment six months after completing their training compared to 77.8% of graduates for all fields combined (NCVER, 2009a). Most of these graduates found work outside the creative industries. Employment outcomes were better for Creative Arts VET graduates with a Diploma (66% were employed) and lowest for those with a Certificate I or II qualification (49% were employed).

Table 2. Employment outcomes of Creative Arts VET graduates and all VET graduates, six months are completing studies

Qualification	Employed after training
Diploma	
Creative Arts	66.0%
All fields	80.8%
Certificate III-IV	
Creative Arts	61.5%
All fields	83.2%
Certificate I-II	
Creative Arts	49.0%
All fields	66.4%
All VET qualifications	
Creative Arts	60.9%
All fields	77.8%

Source: NCVER (2009a)

Arts and Media Professionals who graduated from VET courses in 2008 also experienced employment outcomes below that for all VET graduates combined. Just over 60% of Arts and Media Professionals found work after completing their studies, mainly outside the creative industries compared to 79.8% of all VET graduates combined (NCVER, 2009b). As a result, 39.8% of Arts and Media VET graduates who completed their studies in 2008 were unemployed when they were surveyed in 2009.

Over 80% of employers who responded to the 60Sox employer survey indicated that aspiring creatives only accounted for between 0% and 20% of all workers (Haukka et al., 2010). Over the previous 12 months, 56% of employers surveyed had recruited new workers, particularly graphic designers and programmers, with around half of these new workers sourced from interstate and overseas. Almost half of the employers found it difficult to recruit aspiring creatives with the ‘right’

skills, and 46% indicated a preference for creative talent and/or the necessary job skills than qualifications when employing aspiring creatives (see Figure 5).

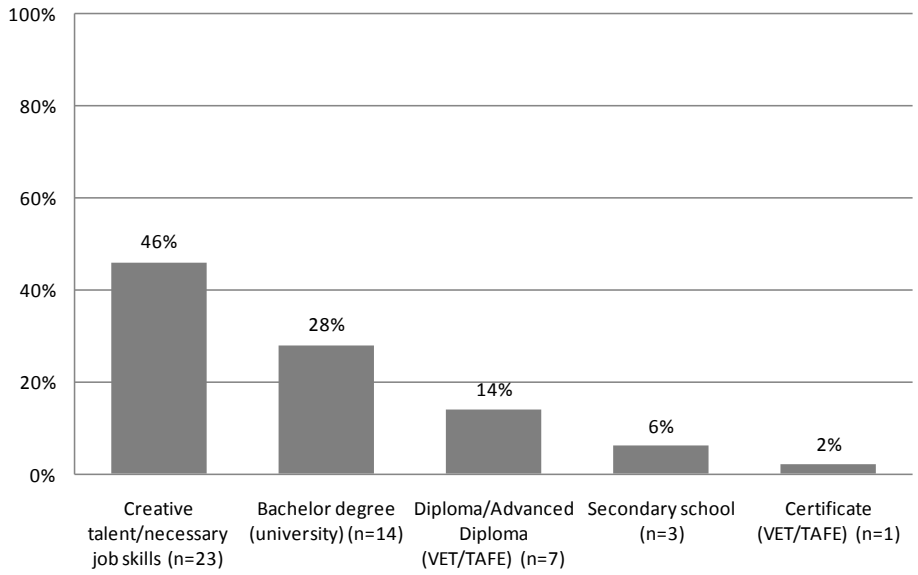

Table 5. Recruitment preferences of employers
Source: Haukka et al. (2010)

Matching between education/training characteristics and occupational status

Karmel, Mlotkowski, and Awodeyi (2008) examined the match between what people study at the VET level and the jobs they get, stating that a good match is an indicator that the VET system is performing its role of helping individuals to gain vocational skills. A mismatch can be measured by a low percentage of graduates employed in an occupation relevant to their training, thereby reducing returns on training investment. The following data for Creative Arts VET graduates and Arts and Media VET graduates suggests a serious mismatch between what they study and the jobs they get. However, this data does not indicate whether they are working in other occupations that are utilising their specialist and/or generic skills they developed in their VET course. It also does not recognise that career progression for those trained to work in the creative industries is not as clear cut as those trained to work in other industries.

Six months after completing their studies only 14.2% of Creative Arts VET graduates were in the same occupation as their training course compared to 37.1% of VET graduates for all fields combined (NCVER, 2009a). Outcomes were highest for Creative Arts VET graduates with a Diploma level qualification and lowest for those with a Certificate I or II qualifications (see Table 3). The main occupations filled by Creative Arts VET graduates were sales workers, professionals, community and personal service workers, and technicians and trade workers. The main industries of employment were outside the creative industries i.e. retail trade, accommodation and food services, and professional, scientific and technical services.

Table 3. Occupation group of Creative Arts VET graduates and all VET graduates, six months are completing studies

Qualification	In same occupation group as training course
Diploma	
Creative Arts	21.2%
All fields	22.3%
Certificate III-IV	
Creative Arts	10.5%
All fields	46.1%
Certificate I-II	
Creative Arts	6.8%
All fields	21.1%
All VET qualifications	
Creative Arts	14.2%
All fields	37.1%

Source: NCVER (2009a)

As shown in Table 4, only 4.9% Arts and Media VET graduates who found work in 2008 were employed in the same occupation as their training course compared to 29.6% for all VET graduates combined (NCVER, 2009b). Of particular concern is the finding that well over one-third (38%) of Arts and Media VET graduates did not find their training course relevant to their current job compared to 15.4% for all VET graduates combined.

Table 4. Employment outcomes of Arts and Media Professionals VET graduates and all VET graduates, 2008

	Arts and Media Professionals	All VET graduates
Same occupation as training course	4.9%	29.6%
In different occupation to training course - training was relevant to current job	15.5%	33.2%
In different occupation to training course - training not relevant to current job	38.0%	15.4%

Source: NCVER (2009b)

Regardless of qualification level, the majority of Creative Arts VET graduates were satisfied with the training, received personal benefits from the training, achieved their main reason for undertaking training, and would recommend the training to others (see Table 5). However, graduates were less satisfied with job-related benefits from their training. In 2009, 59.7% of graduates with qualifications at the Diploma level and above (compared to 67.4% in 2007), 48.1% of graduates with Certificate III-IV level qualifications, and 38.3% of graduates with Certificate I-II qualifications received job-related benefits from their training (NCVER, 2007, 2009a).

Table 5. Creative Arts VET Graduates' satisfaction with training, 2007 and 2009

Qualification level	2007	2009
Diploma and above		
Satisfied with the training	84.8%	88.9%
Received job-related benefits from the training	67.4%	59.7%
Received personal benefits from the training	99.1%	99.7%
Achieved main reason for undertaking training	81.2%	73.0%
Recommend the training to others	93.5%	94.8%
Certificates III-IV		
Satisfied with the training	85.9%	87.0%
Received job-related benefits from the training	44.0%	48.1%
Received personal benefits from the training	97.4%	97.9%
Achieved main reason for undertaking training	78.6%	79.1%
Recommend the training to others	93.3%	94.3%
Certificate I-II		
Satisfied with the training	87.2%	92.5%
Received job-related benefits from the training	41.6%	38.3%
Received personal benefits from the training	94.3%	97.6%
Achieved main reason for undertaking training	82.6%	86.7%
Recommend the training to others	90.8%	94.5%

Source: NCVER (2007, 2009a)

Wages and wage growth

Data on wages for graduates of creative industries courses was only available for Arts/Design university graduates and Creative Arts VET graduates. Although wage levels for these graduates are improving, their wages are increasing at a slower rate than wages for all graduates combined and remain below wages for all graduates combined.

Between 2006 and 2009, the median starting salary for Arts/Design university graduates with a Bachelor degree, under the age of 25 years and in their first full-time job increased by an average of 4% a year compared to 5.7% a year for graduates for all fields combined (Graduate Careers Australia, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). In 2009, the median starting salary of Arts/Design university graduates was $37,300 (the second lowest for all fields of education) compared to $48,000 for graduates for all fields combined (see Figure 6). The gap between the median salary of Arts/Design university graduates and the median salary for graduates for all fields combined widened in 2009, with Arts/Design graduates earning 77.7% of the median salary for graduates for all fields combined in 2009 compared to 81.6% in the previous year.

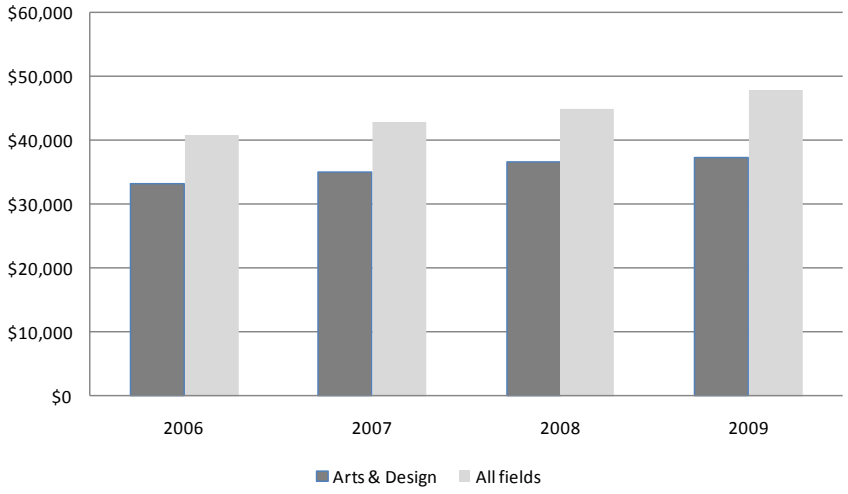

Figure 6. Median starting salaries of Art/Design university graduates and all graduates in first full-time employment and aged less than 25 years, 2006–2009

Source: Graduate Careers Australia (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009)

Wages of Creative Arts graduates increased by 7.2% between 2007 and 2009 compared to 8.6% for all VET graduates combined (see Table 6). The average salary of Creative Arts VET graduates of $38,800 in 2009 was 20% lower than the average salary for all VET graduates of $46,700. It is surprising that the average wage in 2009 and growth in wages between 2007 and 2009 for Creative Arts graduates with lower level qualifications (i.e. Certificate I-IV) were above that for graduates with qualifications at the Diploma level and above (NCVER, 2007, 2009a).

Table 6. Average wages for Creative Arts VET graduates and all VET graduates combined

Qualification	Creative Arts (2007)	Creative Arts (2009)	Growth (%)	All VET graduates (2007)	All VET graduates (2009)	Growth (%)
Diploma & above	$36,500	$38,000	4.1%	$48,000	$52,000	8.3%
Certificate III-IV	$36,200	$39,200	8.3%	$43,400	$47,000	8.3%
Certificate I-II	$35,600	$39,700	11.5%	$39,500	$42,100	6.6%
All qualifications	$36,200	$38,800	7.2%	$43,000	$46,700	8.6%

Source: NCVER (2007, 2009a)

Security of employment

Job security refers to the likelihood of a worker losing his/her job for reasons usually related to deficient demand. Factors influencing job security include individual worker characteristics (e.g. gender, age, educational attainment), job-related characteristics (e.g. sector of employment and firm size), business cycle factors, and structural factors (e.g. change in government legislation) (Borland, 2000). The analysis of job security of aspiring creatives is limited to the job-related characteristic of employment type. It assumes freelancing, self-employment, and casual employment provides aspiring creatives with lower levels of job security whereas full-time employment provides aspiring creatives with higher levels of job security. Only 66 respondents of the 507 respondents to the aspiring creatives survey indicated their employment status using their creative talent as well as their

employment type. Of the 30 respondents currently employed to use their creative talent, 36.7% were freelancers/self-employed and 30% were in full-time employment (see Figure 7). Sixteen (16) of the 36 respondents who were currently employed but *not* using their creative talent were working casually (44.4%), partly due to the large number of students who completed the survey.

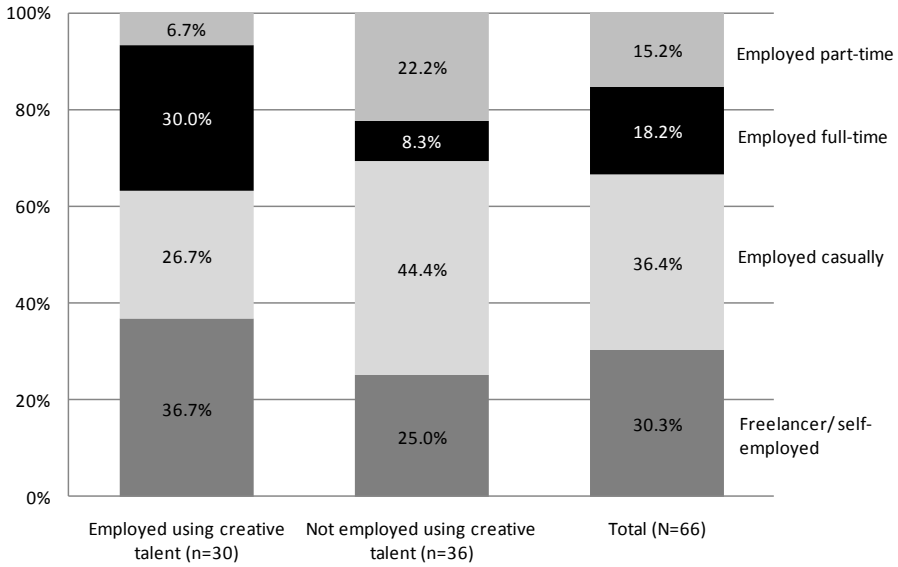

Figure 7. Employment of aspiring creatives by employment type

Source: Haukka et al. (2009)

Job and career mobility

International mobility of highly skilled workers is a key vehicle for knowledge flows and transfers. It helps workers to keep up-to-date with developments in their field, and can lead to new fields of knowledge (OECD, 2002a). The OECD (2002b) identified key reasons why workers choose to work overseas, which are applicable to workers in creative occupations. These reasons include better job opportunities than those at home, a more conducive environment for business start-ups and self-employment, and non-economic factors such as access to leading technologies and experts. Any loss of creative talent to other countries is a concern when these workers do not return, affecting the competitiveness of Australia's creative industries and forcing some employers to recruit highly skilled workers from overseas in response to

skills shortages. Of the 50 employers who responded to the employer survey, 23 employers had recruited workers from overseas between 2008 and 2009. The Film, TV and Radio segment, Software Development and Interactive Content segment, and Advertising and Marketing segment were more likely to recruit workers from overseas than employers in the other three segments.

Of the 303 respondents to the aspiring creatives survey who answered questions related to mobility, 64% indicated that mobility was important to their career prospects and 70% indicated an intention to work overseas (see Figure 8). Preferred international destinations for work were New York, London and Tokyo. Only 57 aspiring creatives indicated that they were already mobile.

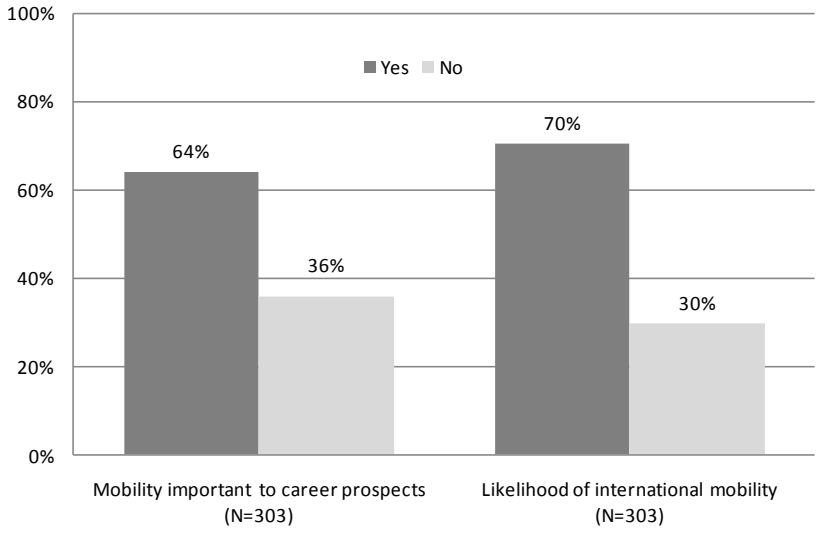

Figure 8. Mobility of aspiring creatives

Source: Haukka et al. (2009)

Respondents to the aspiring creatives survey identified several benefits of working overseas. They included greater exposure, networking, new ideas and inspiration, cultural experiences, larger markets, more employment opportunities, better work conditions, access to cutting-edge technology, greater recognition of work, and better employment prospects when they return to Australia. Reasons given by respondents who were *not* planning to work overseas were good career prospects

in Australia, preference to focus on their careers in Australia, family and friends in Australia, global access through the internet, and they cannot afford to leave.

Access to on-the-job or employer-sponsored training

On completion of training, those people in creative occupations often organise their own process for learning and ongoing up-skilling (MKW, 2001). Unlike the long established apprenticeship system for trades or the formal entry into professional recognition bodies for careers such as law, medicine and teaching, they do not have traditional, well-established structures or organisations to help continue their journey of lifelong learning and continuous upskilling or to facilitate employment opportunities in a systematic manner. Post-entry skills acquisition is primarily through self-directed learning, coaching and mentoring. As a result, training solutions must be characterised by flexibility and modularity (SkillSet, 2004).

Thirty (30) respondents to the employer survey indicated the extent to which they provided training to aspiring creatives over the previous 12 months. Employers were most like to indicate ‘sometimes’ (33% of respondents) or ‘often’ (30% of respondents) providing training for aspiring creatives. Examples of training provided include online tutorials and courses, induction training, short courses, seminar attendance, and on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring. It is worth noting that Haukka et al. (2010) found that aspiring creatives rated their learning skills significantly higher than employers rated the learning skills of aspiring creatives.

Transition enhancers

Networks of business and creative relationships are very important in the creative industries (e.g. Scott, 2000; Jeffcutt, 2004), helping to fill gaps in knowledge and skills (The Work Foundation, 2007). Some of these networks and relationships flourish in communities of practice defined by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder

(2002) as a group of individuals formed around common interests and expertise, providing an ideal vehicle for knowledge flow, exchange, and management. The majority of respondents to the employer survey were active in their communities, and many support the capability development of aspiring creatives. Over the previous 12 months, 42% of employers had offered internships to aspiring creatives and 40% had mentored aspiring creatives.

The aspiring creatives survey also included questions about their participation in communities of practice/networks and mentoring opportunities as a means for aspiring creatives to build industry networks, increase their understanding of the skills needs of employers, and enhance their employability. Just over 27% of respondents to the aspiring creatives survey were involved in 'online' communities of practice. Given that employers were most likely to recruit aspiring creatives via word of mouth and networks (SkillSet, 2009a; Haukka et al., 2010), aspiring creatives must regularly participate in relevant 'physical' or face-to-face communities of practice, networks and learning opportunities. The analysis found that aspiring creatives were not adequately engaging with industry. Only 13.6% of respondents were involved in 'physical' communities of practice, 28.8% had a direct personal involvement with someone in their preferred creative industry, and 14.8% had experienced a mentoring relationship with an industry representative. Acknowledging the significant benefits of engaging with industry (identified by aspiring creatives as generating ideas, feedback on creative and technical work, employment opportunities, and industry contacts), 96% of aspiring creatives who responded to the relevant survey question indicated a desire to increase their engagement with industry.

Factors influencing successful transitions

As well as determining the extent to which aspiring creatives were experiencing successful education-to-work transitions, Haukka et al. (2009, 2010) were also interested in identifying any factors that enhance and inhibit successful transitions from the point of view of both aspiring creatives and employers.

The factors of being full-time employment, self-employed, and undertaking freelance/project work were found to be associated with a higher likelihood that aspiring creatives were *currently* in paid employment using their creative talent; factors that may *enhance* transitions. The factors of age, having an Australian Business Number (ABN), involvement in communities of interest/networks, and personal engagement with industry were found to be associated with a higher likelihood that aspiring creatives were *previously* in paid employment using their creative talent; again, factors that may *enhance transitions*. (Haukka et al., 2009).

Almost half of all respondents to the aspiring creatives survey indicated finding work was either ‘difficult’ or ‘very hard’. The factors of being employed casually or part-time; enrolled in a Graduate Diploma/Graduate Certificate, Diploma or Certificate; or at the beginning, middle or final year of a course were associated with a higher likelihood of having a perception that finding work is ‘difficult’ or ‘very hard’; factors that may *inhibit transitions* (Haukka et al., 2009).

Haukka et al. (2010) limited their analysis of employers’ views of capabilities of aspiring creatives to five skills, selected using the following criteria: (1) employers regarded the skills as particularly important to their workplaces; (2) there were significant differences between employers’ views of the importance of skills to their workplaces and their views of the skills of aspiring creatives, and/or (3) there were significant differences between employers’ views of the skills of aspiring creatives

and aspiring creatives' views of their own skills. Based on these criteria, the analysis focussed on team work skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, and learning skills. The analysis also included job-specific skills due to ongoing concerns about skills gaps.

The analysis identified factors that influence employers' views about the capabilities of aspiring creatives that are common to these skills areas. Haukka et al. (2010) found that employers who employ visual artists and animators, and/or find it 'easy/very easy' to recruit the 'right' graduates were most likely to indicate *higher levels of capability* of aspiring creatives; factors that may *enhance* transitions. Employers from the Architecture, Design and Visual Art sector and/or which have operated for less than five (5) years were more likely to indicate *lower levels of capability* of aspiring creatives; factors that may *inhibit* transitions.

Causes and solutions

The analysis of findings in the previous section confirmed that many graduates of creative industries courses who participated in the 60Sox project survey or the national surveys for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and Graduate Careers Australia were struggling to make a successful transition from education to work. This section discusses the causes of this key finding, and solutions implemented or proposed to address transition issues.

There are a number of well known causes of transition issues in the creative industries that are common to other industries in Australia and elsewhere. Firstly, employers are dissatisfied with education and training providers due to (1) providers putting students' needs first and taking a long-term view of curriculum, making it difficult to immediately add a new class or adjust the curriculum (Swain, 2009); (2) providers not offering vocational programmes that are a 'mix of knowledge, skill

and judgement that can only be developed on-the-job and which employers seek" (Guile, forthcoming as cited in Guile, 2006, pp. 439–440); (3) a lack of industry engagement at the planning level (Buchan Consulting, 2005); and (4) reliance on traditional didactic styles of delivery rather than providing exposure to experienced people (Guile, 2006). Secondly, graduates may not be adequately prepared to shift from managing themselves and having access to peers to reporting to a boss and working with "many different types of people, of different ages with different levels of education and different backgrounds" (Graham and McKenzie, 1995, p. 4). Thirdly, graduates may have what Connor, Strebler, and Hirsh (1990) called "grossly inflated expectations" about their role in this workplace (cited in Graham and McKenzie, 1995) or act "entitled" to work in the industry, which can cause tension in the workplace (Swain, 2009). Finally, graduates are criticised for lacking the generic skills required by industry such as communication skills, team work skills, problem-solving skills, time management skills, and project management skills (House Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology, and the Arts, 2004; Haukka, 2010); some of which allow tacit knowledge to be exchanged and developed (Workforce Foundation, 2007)

Possible solutions identified to address transition issues experienced by graduates in the creative industries and in other industries include:

- a close connection between the education and training system and industry to ensure the education system prepares graduates for the world of work, students have access to opportunities to spend time in the workplace during their studies, and teachers have the necessary industry experience
- mechanisms and frameworks to enable accurate assessment of industry and labour market needs, with these needs reflected in curriculum
- employer-endorsed courses and qualifications
- courses that effectively cover generic skills, particularly those that are transferable to other areas and are of growing importance in the knowledge economy

- employers managing the culture change/shock experienced by graduates when they first start work as well as any differences in the expectations of graduates and their expectations
- systematic policy frameworks that ensure universal access to high quality information and guidance services
- flexible education and training pathways that can accommodate the growing diversity of students' needs and interests
- access to formal and informal mentoring schemes, coaching and feedback on work.

(Creative and Cultural Skills, 2008; Ecclestone, 2009; Graham & McKenzie, 1995; House Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology, and the Arts, 2004; Jung et al., 2004; OECD, 2000).

There are three transition issues that graduates in the creative industries are more likely to experience than graduates in other industries. Firstly, qualifications alone do not guarantee entry into the workforce (SkillSet, 2009a; Guile, 2006; Haukka et al., 2010), which is a major concern when the increasing pool of graduates exceeds demand and when the Government relies more heavily on the 'training state' as a pathway into work (Mizen, 2004 as cited in Brooks, 2009). In the United Kingdom, this concern has been exacerbated by an "extraordinarily complex array of qualifications purporting to service the creative and cultural sector .... driven by the appeal of the sector to young people and the interest in learning creative subjects within schools, Further and Higher Education" (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2008, p. 7). In 2009, Innovation & Business Skills Australia reviewed digital games development courses and concluded that current training packages were not satisfying current or future needs of digital games development, 3D digital art, animation, or game programming.

Secondly, aspiring creatives may not have the time or resources for professional development and/or adequately engage with industry through voluntary unpaid work and participation in networks; activities which build their human, cultural and social capital (Guile, 2006; Galloway et al., 2002; Haukka et al., 2009). A

study on the factors that influence individual innovation capacity and career development of leading Australian innovators from science and technology and the creative industries found that collaborative relationships and networks (particularly trans-disciplinary networks) open up information channels and create opportunities for knowledge exchange, innovation, and other determinants of competitive advantage (Bridgstock, Dawson and Hearn, forthcoming).

Thirdly, aspiring creatives work or intend to work in complex markets that the European Commission (2006) described as "highly volatile, depending on fashion, trends and consumption uncertainties" (p. 35). Some products in these markets are short lived while demand for other products remains strong, particularly those generated by the digital revolution. Aspiring creatives need to develop modes of thinking and learning that enable them to adapt quickly to new markets and market niches, technologies, consumer needs, business models, and jobs, caused to some extent by increasing convergence that is resulting in sectors becoming "intertwined economically and technologically in radical new ways" (Guile, 2006). At the same time, aspiring creatives need to design careers that serve their own learning, personal and professional (Brooks, 2009). They need to be what Bois-Reymond (2004) called 'trendsetter learners' i.e. learners who are intrinsically motivated to create "their own learning agendas by drawing less on formal education and more on informal and non-formal learning contexts" (p. 187).

Possible solutions identified to address transition issues experienced by graduates in the creative industries include:

- industry participation in the form of attendance at student showcases, sponsorship of student contests and awards, master class and collaborative sessions, mentoring by self-selected practitioners, guest speakers and speaker series, adjunct professorships for people from industry, and access to networks (Swain, 2009)

- providing aspiring creatives with the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teams where they develop technical, creative, business management and networking skills
- courses that increase students' understanding of enterprise sustainability, market requirements, audience targets, financing opportunities, and new technologies (European Commission, 2006)
- funding and tax incentives to encourage companies to employ newly qualified people and offer structured on-the-job training opportunities such as internships and traineeships
- more modular or 'bite-sized' qualifications within a nationally recognised framework for professional development (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2008)
- creative apprenticeships to develop knowledge and skill of a range of creative and cultural sub-sectors rather than occupationally specific knowledge and skill (Hutton, 2006 as cited in Creative and Cultural Skills, 2008). The UK's Sector Qualifications Strategy includes the first creative apprenticeship.
- apprenticeship options such as the *accredited route* (based on qualifications), the *industry-recognised route* (based on non-accredited activities such as work placements, internships and master classes), and the *network route* designed to develop capability and capacity within a region and involves non-accredited activities (Guile, 2006, p. 450)
- higher education institutions in vacation periods making some of their equipment and facilities available to new graduates trying to establish themselves
- a more flexible benefit system that recognises the sporadic pattern of those working in creative occupations
- increasing awareness of the full range of relevant Government support and business support schemes and programmes.

(Bridgstock et al., in press; European Commission, 2006; Galloway et al., 2002; Guile, 2006; House Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology, and the Arts, 2004; Potts & Cunningham, 2008; Swain, 2009)

Conclusion

Potts and Cunningham (2008) identified four reasons why aspiring creatives can look forward to further growth in the creative industries. These reasons are (1) rising affluence, shifting aggregate expenditure toward the creative industries; (2) the related rise in human capital, providing more opportunities for specialisation; (3) growth in ICT, which is the technology base of the creative industries; and (4) globalisation, which is increasing access to global markets (p. 16). This growth is dependent on sustaining a pool of highly skilled workers. Before entering the creative industries, existing workers probably participated in education and training and/or had their

talent nurtured in institutional and other settings. If industry, education and training providers, policymakers and aspiring creatives do not take more action to address education-to-work transition issues presented in this article, the future pool of internationally competitive workers in Australia is at risk.

The purpose of this article was to analyse the labour market outcomes of aspiring creatives, explain why aspiring creatives were struggling to make a successful transition from education to work, and identify possible solutions to address transition issues. The analysis of data presented in this article confirmed two key transition challenges facing the creative industries in Australia and elsewhere. These challenges are ensuring talented aspiring creatives have the right knowledge, skills, attributes and qualifications to enter the creative industries; and once employed, access to incentives and support to enable them to have a sustainable and successful career. Addressing these challenges will involve, but not limited to, providing aspiring creatives with opportunities to gain industry experience as early as possible; ensuring education and training providers and industry work together to develop, deliver and quickly adjust courses; changing employers' negative perceptions of the capabilities of aspiring creatives; and helping aspiring creatives to become lifelong learners and effective networkers. These actions will go a long way in helping the creative industries to create a pool of new workers who have the necessary skills sets to generate, share and commodify new ideas and knowledge.

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